

# Determinants of defending in prejudice-based bullying situations

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# Determinants of defending in prejudice-based bullying situations

Findings from the GATE-BULL project

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# Rationale

- **Prejudice-based bullying (PBB)** is a widespread phenomenon (Salmivalli et al., 2010; Thornberg et al., 2015)
- **Motivated by prejudice on an individual's actual or perceived identity** (e.g. ethnicity, physical appearance, disability; Aboud et al., 2012)
- **Bystander intervention effective, but few intervene** (Hawkins, 2001)



# Rationale: Perspective

- Research on defending primarily focuses on interpersonal bullying episodes (Palmer et al., 2015)
  - Bullying based on personal characteristics of victim
  - Defender determinants: Awareness, resilience, efficacy
- Implemented interventions may overlook group processes involved in bullying (Killen et al., 2013)
  - Exclusion/devaluation based on perceived group membership
    - Ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, etc.
  - Defender determinants: group membership, ingroup identification, group norms



How to encourage safe bystander intervention while taking into account group processes?

# GATE-BULL

- *Games approach to TEach children about discriminatory BULLying*
- Funded by European Union (Erasmus+)
  - Collaboration between universities from Scotland, Netherlands, Slovakia, and Greece
- Aim of the project
  - Identify determinants of defending in PBB situations
  - Develop an educational game to encourage defending in PBB incidents



# Phase 1: Determinant analyses

- Data collected in all partner countries
  - Scotland, Slovakia, Greece, The Netherlands
- Focus groups and survey
- Inclusion criteria:
  - Children's age: 10-12 years
  - From mixed schools
    - *Appr. 25% of children belong to minority group (i.e., non-white or non-Christian children)*
- Research question:
  - What are the most relevant determinants to address in the intervention?



# Study population



Data collection  
finalized in  
October

Data for focus  
groups collected

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Data collection  
finalized in  
October



n = 261  
M<sub>age</sub> = 10.8 year  
Girl = 49.4%  
Non-white = 22.2%  
Non-Christ = 26.8%



n = 289  
M<sub>age</sub> = 11.3 years  
Girl = 51.0%  
Non-white = 9.4%  
Non-Christ = 3.9%

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## Focus groups: Results





# Stigmatized groups

- Victimization because of ethnicity, socio-economic status or physical appearance
  - *“The girls told me not to touch their desk because I am a Gypsy.” (Roma girl, Slovakia)*
  - *“There are situations in which pupils from other classes shout at me that I am fat.” (Slovak girl)*
  - *“An A class pupil from another country was playing at the school playground and two older students attacked him and started beating him, calling him names about his nationality”. (Greek girl)*
  - *“I heard a story where this girl who is a Muslim [...] and they said 'Oh are you part of ISIS' and that, and then they took off her hijab”. (Black girl, Scotland)*



# Determinants of defending

- Fear of reprisal
  - *“When I defended a Roma classmate against teasing, my classmates started to spread rumours about me that I am a Roma too.” (Slovak girl)*
- Sense of injustice/empathy
  - *“When Roma classmates, a boy and a girl, in Year 1 jumped the queue of the smallest Roma classmates (NB – the poorest children in the class), I stopped them and defended those girls because it made them sad and it was unfair. Then, however, they started to threaten me they would call older pupils from another class to beat me on my way home. I was really scared.” (Slovak girl)*
  - *“I don’t like it when people are getting bullied – it hurts me” (Black girl, Scotland)*
- Not blaming the victim
  - *“In our class, we used to tease a poor girl, saying she stinks. Nobody wanted to hold her hand. Then our teacher told us they did not have a bathroom at home as we do. We have not teased her anymore since then because she is not responsible for that.” (Slovak boy)*



# Defending strategies

- Telling teacher or parent
- Comforting the victim
  - *“I went to her because she was sad.” (Roma girl, Slovakia)*
  - *“Like every time they said something bad, I would tell my friend that they shouldn’t listen to them because they’re just being really nasty, because it’s just not nice” (Black girl, Scotland)*
- Telling bullies they are doing wrong
  - *“I started screaming at the person, told them to leave them alone and they backed off for a bit and then they came back. I made sure that my friend stayed away from the person. (Black girl, Scotland)*
- In some instances physical attack
  - *“It depends. If they’re fighting you, if they’re fighting your friend, you might be physical back but there’s no need for it”. (Black girl, Scotland)*
- Indication that it is easier to defend ingroup member. Outgroup members are defended if “this is the right thing to do”



# Survey: Concepts measured

- (Prejudice-based) bullying roles
  - *Bully, victim, defender, bystander*
- Stigmatized groups
  - *Ethnicity/religion, weight, additional needs*
- Group processes
  - *Ingroup identification, ingroup bias, pluralistic ignorance, teacher and peer norms, intergroup contact*
- Individual processes
  - *Stigma by association, moral disengagement, self-efficacy, personal responsibility*



ILLUSTRATION BY DONGYUN LEE

## Concepts measured

Concept	<i>M (SD)</i>	N items	Scale range	$\alpha$
Bullying roles	[4 subscales]	4	1-5	.67, .71, .78, .84
Stigma by association	1.83 (0.95)	6	1-5	.90
Teacher norm	3.39 (1.37)	1	1-5	NA
Peer norm	3.08 (1.38)	1	1-5	NA
Moral disengagement	[4 subscales]	[scale dependent]	1-5	.50, .62, .65, .66
Self-efficacy	3.36 (1.06)	2	1-5	.72
Personal responsibility	2.73 (1.22)	1	1-5	NA
Pluralistic ignorance	-0.21 (0.71)	2*	-5 - 5	Self (.72) Other (.84)
Ingroup bias	0.58 (0.89)	2*	-5 - 5	Ingroup (.86) Outgroup (.88)
Intergroup contact	2.63 (0.79)	5	1-5	.66

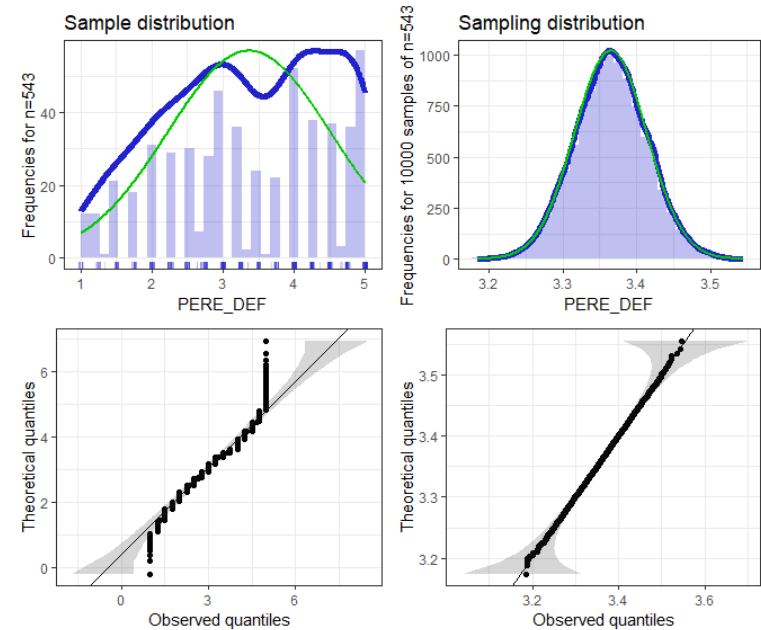
# Methods of analyses

- Goal: selection of most relevant determinants for intervention development
  - Means, correlations, data distribution
- Method: CIBER plots (Crutzen et al., 2017)
  - Confidence Interval-Based Estimation of Relevance
- Judgement of:
  - *Importance*: How strongly is the determinant associated with the behavior?
  - *Relevance*: Does the target group already hold a positive belief?
  - *Changeability*: Is it practically possible to change the determinant?



# Results: Bullying roles

- Prejudice-based bullying experiences:
  - Bullying: 16.1%
  - Defending: 44.1%
  - Victimization: 22.9%
- Bullying roles in general ( $M \pm SD$ ; range 1 – 5)
  - Bullying:  $1.52 \pm 0.59$
  - Defending:  $3.36 \pm 1.14$
  - Victimization:  $1.78 \pm 0.79$
  - Standing by:  $1.99 \pm 0.93$



**Figure 1.** Sample and sampling distribution of experiences with defending (PERE\_DEF)

# Means and importance of prejudice-based bullying experiences with defending (R2 = [.24; .38])

All children  
 $n = 550$

Self-efficacy to defend

Low High

Perceived peer norm

Low High

Intergroup contact

Low High

Being a victim

Little experience Much experience

Being a bully

Little experience Much experience

Ingroup bias

Low High

Moral disengagement  
Cognitive restructuring

Low High

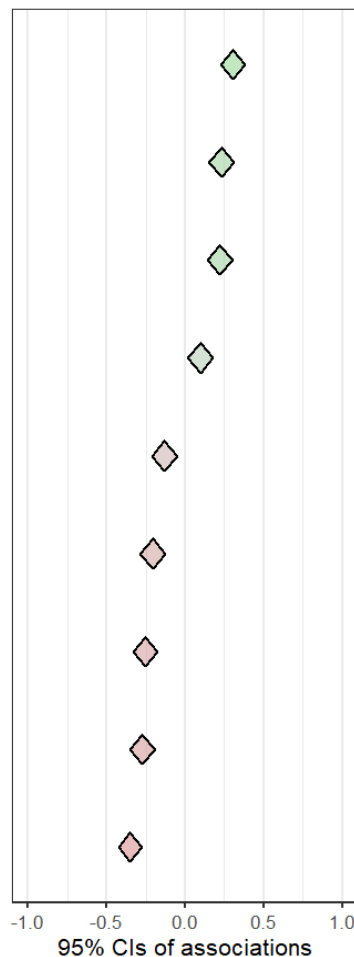
Moral disengagement  
Blaming the victim

Low High

Being a bystander

Little experience Much experience

Scores and 99.99% CIs



$r = .30^{***}$

$r = .23^{***}$

$r = .22^{***}$

$r = .10^*$

$r = -.13^{**}$

$r = -.21^{***}$

$r = -.25^{***}$

$r = -.27^{***}$

$r = -.35^{***}$



# Means and importance of prejudice-based bullying experiences with defending (R2 = [.28; .44])

Majority group  
children  
 $n = 403$

Self-efficacy to defend

Perceived peer norm

Intergroup contact

Being a victim

Being a bully

Ingroup bias

Moral disengagement  
Blaming the victim

Being a bystander

Moral disengagement  
Cognitive restructuring

Low

Low

Low

Little experience

Little experience

Low

Low

Little experience

Low

Low

Low

Low

Little experience

Little experience

Low

Low

Little experience

Low

High

High

High

Much experience

Much experience

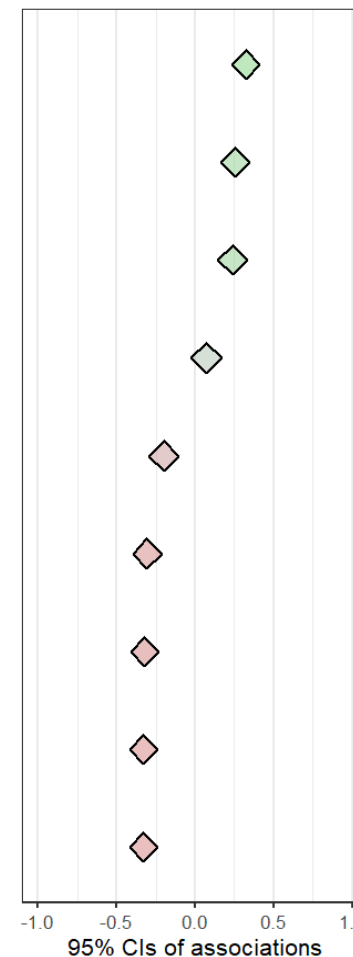
High

High

Much experience

High

Scores and 99.99% CIs



$r = .33^{***}$

$r = .25^{***}$

$r = .24^{***}$

$r = .07$

$r = -.20^{***}$

$r = -.31^{***}$

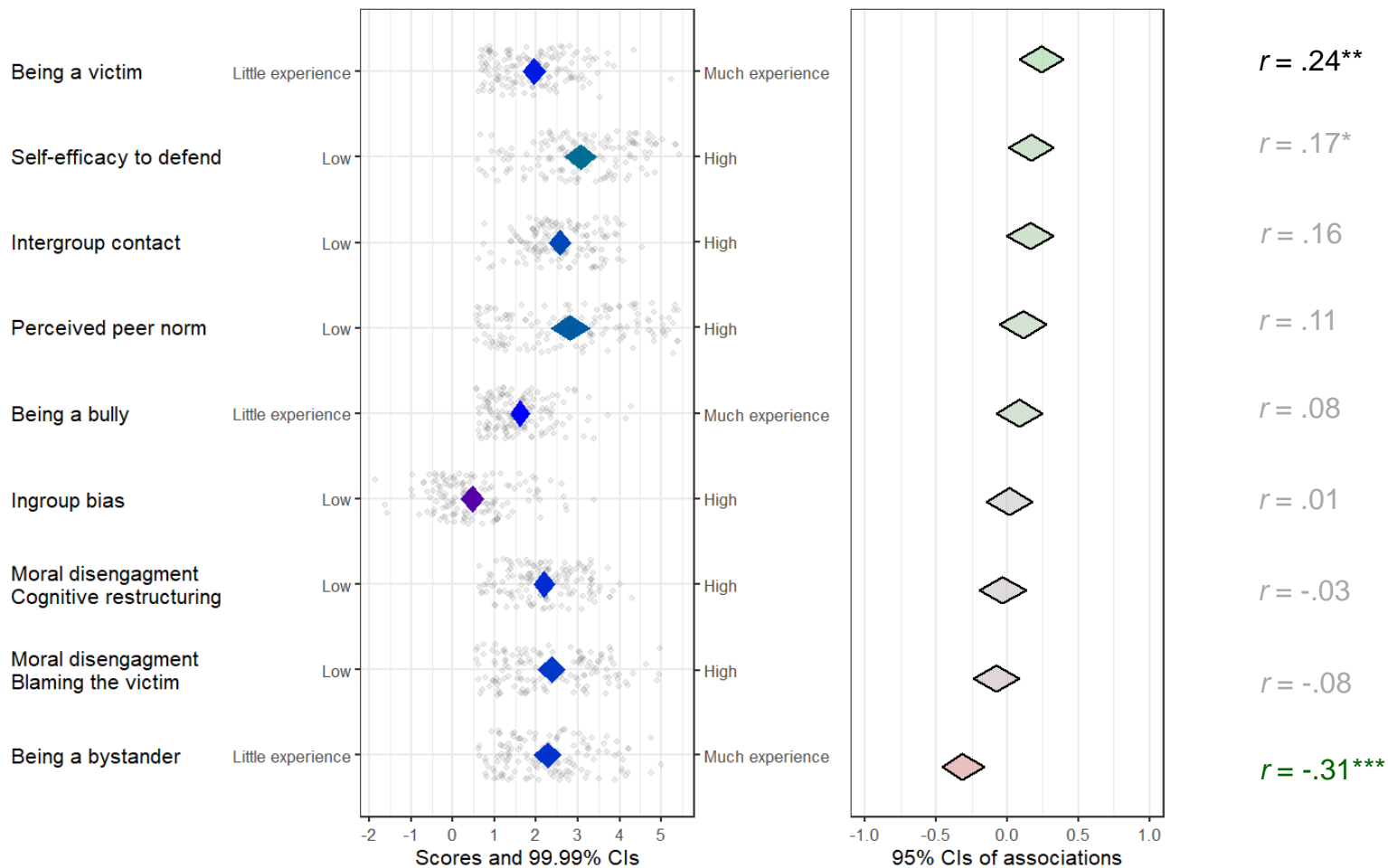
$r = -.32^{***}$

$r = -.33^{***}$

$r = -.33^{***}$

# Means and importance of prejudice-based bullying experiences with defending (R2 = [.15; .44])

Minority group  
children  
 $n = 147$



# Conclusion

- Children indicate having experiences with prejudice-based bullying situations
- Several strategies are used when defending a victim
  - *Telling adult, comforting victim, discouraging bullies, physical attack*
- Several psychological and groups-related determinants are related to defending
- Determinants of defending differ between majority and minority groups
  - *Majority group: self-efficacy, moral disengagement, intergroup contact, ingroup bias, perceived peer norm*
  - *Minority group: having been a victim too*
- Results provide important input for intervention development
  - *More data needs to be collected*



# Discussion: Requirements for game

- The game:
  - *Should aim to reduce stereotypes and outgroup bias by encouraging empathy, perspective taking, and “imagining counter-stereotypic examples” (McBride, 2015)*
  - *Should provide opportunities for collaborative working with members of minority groups under the conditions identified by Intergroup Contact Theory*
  - *The intervention should aim to reduce moral disengagement attitudes*
  - *The intervention should aim to increase bystanders’ self-efficacy*
  - *Learning should be experiential and not instructional. Children should be allowed to voice their often-conflicting viewpoints openly in a safe environment*

**BYSTANDER  
REVOLUTION**

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